

R 031014Z APR 97
FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4041
INFO IRAN COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 001030

LONDON FOR TUELLER; PARIS FOR LEAF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/2/07
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN--RAFSANJANI FAMILY, WOMEN IN THE MAJLES.
PART THREE IN A SERIES.

REF: A) ISTANBUL 770 B) ISTANBUL 960

11. CONFIDENTIAL. CLASSIFIED BY CONS THOMAS H. CARTER
FOR REASONS 1.5.(B) AND (D).

12. (C) SUMMARY: THE FAMILY OF ALI AKBAR HASHEMI
RAFSANJANI, ESPECIALLY HIS DAUGHTER FAEZEH, WILL REMAIN
POWERFUL DESPITE RAFSANJANI'S IMMINENT RETIREMENT, SAYS
AN IRANIAN BUSINESSMAN. AZAN TALEGHANI, DAUGHTER OF THE
LATE AYATOLLAH TALEGHANI, ADDS THAT FEMALE
REPRESENTATION IN THE MAJLES IS INCREASING BUT IRANIAN
WOMEN HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING WORK IN ANY FIELD OTHER
THAN TEACHING. ADVOCACY GROUPS SUCH THE ISLAMIC WOMEN'S
INSTITITUTE OF IRAN, OF WHICH MS. TALEGHANI IS
PRESIDENT, HELP FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND PROFESSIONALS
FIND JOBS. THIS REPORT IS THE THIRD IN A SERIES.
REFTELS A AND B DEALT WITH THE US EMBARGO, IRANIAN
RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS, AND THE SEPARATION OF MOSQUE AND
STATE IN IRAN. END SUMMARY.

FAEZEH RAFSANJANI WANTS TO BE SPEAKER

13. (C) IF CURRENT MAJLES SPEAKER NATEQ-NURI WINS THE
NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AS EXPECTED, RAFSANJANI'S
OLDEST CHILD FAEZEH MAY BECOME SPEAKER OF THE MAJLES OR
A PRESIDENTIAL DEPUTY. SOURCE, A MULTI-LINGUAL AND
HIGHLY EDUCATED IRANIAN BUSINESSMAN, HAS A FRIEND WHO
PLAYS VOLLEYBALL FOR THE IRANIAN NATIONAL TEAM AND WHO
ATTENDED A DINNER IN JANUARY AT WHICH FAEZEH SPOKE.
(NOTE: FAEZEH IS CURRENTLY THE HEAD OF THE IRANIAN
ATHLETIC FEDERATION.) FAEZEH TOLD THE ASSEMBLY THAT SHE
WOULD WORK HARD AS SPEAKER OF THE MAJLES TO OPEN DOORS
TO THE WEST SO THAT ATHLETES COULD COMPETE
INTERNATIONALLY. SHE ALSO MENTIONED THAT SHE WOULD
REPRESENT HER FATHER IN THE POLITICAL ARENA AND THAT SHE
WOULD CARRY ON HIS FIGHT TO MODERNIZE IRAN.

14. (C) COMMENT: FAEZEH'S STATEMENTS MAKE CLEAR HER
SYMPATHY WITH PRAGMATISTS IN THE MAJLES. DURING LAST
YEAR'S ELECTION SEASON FAEZEH MADE SEVERAL CONTROVERSIAL
STATEMENTS SUCH AS HER BELIEF THAT WOMEN SHOULD BE ABLE
TO RIDE BICYCLES FREELY IN TEHRAN PARKS. SHORTLY AFTER
THE ELECTIONS THE CONSERVATIVE COALITION LED BY KHAMANEI
CONSOLIDATED POWER AND FAEZEH BECAME MUCH LESS VOCAL--
OUR SOURCES CLAIM SHE FEARED DECERTIFICATION. HER
WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK OUT AGAIN SIGNALS EITHER HER
GROWING CONFIDENCE, THE GROWING CONFIDENCE OF THE HARD-
LINERS THAT THEY ARE FIRMLY IN POWER AND NOT THREATENED
BY FAEZEH, OR BOTH. END COMMENT.

FAEZEH'S GENDER NOT IMPORTANT

15. (C) SOURCE SAYS FAEZEH'S GENDER IS NOT AN ISSUE
BECAUSE SHE IS A RAFSANJANI AND BECAUSE OF HER STRONG
PERSONALITY. THE MAJLES HAS A GROWING CONTINGENT OF
FEMALE REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING FARZANI MAYED OF

ISFAHAN AND FARZANI MAJOUN OF TEHRAN. MAHJOUN IS A PRAGMATIST AND THE DAUGHTER OF DR. (FNU) MAHJOUN, FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION UNDER THE SHAH. SOURCE BELIEVES WOMEN WERE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION BUT WERE SHORTCHANGED BY KHOMEINI AND HAVE NOT YET BEEN GIVEN PROPER CREDIT OR AUTHORITY.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: REGARDING FAEZEH BECOMING SPEAKER, SOURCE'S LENSES MAY BE A BIT ROSE-COLORED. A SURVEY OF OTHER IRANIANS COMING THROUGH ISTANBUL PRODUCED ONLY OPINIONS TO THE CONTRARY. ONE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE SAID A WOMAN COULD NEVER ACHIEVE A LEADERSHIP POSITION IN IRAN. EVEN NOW THERE IS DISAGREEMENT ON THE TALLY OF FAEZEH'S ELECTION RESULTS FROM LAST SPRING. LIBERAL SOURCES SAY SHE RECEIVED THE MOST VOTES OF ANY CANDIDATE AND WOULD BE SPEAKER BUT FOR THE FACT THAT SHE IS A WOMAN. MEANWHILE TWO OF THE MAJOR IRANIAN DAILIES CLAIMED SHE RECEIVED THE SECOND HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES, AND SEVERAL CONSERVATIVE SOURCES CLAIM SHE SIMPLY RECEIVED THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES OF ANY FEMALE CANDIDATE. END COMMENT.

OTHER RAFSANJANI CHILDREN COMING INTO THEIR OWN

¶7. (C) PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI WILL REMAIN POWERFUL AFTER HIS RETIREMENT IN AUGUST, SOURCE SAYS, THANKS TO THE GROWING WEALTH AND INFLUENCE OF HIS FAMILY. IN ADDITION TO FAEZEH, THE PRESIDENT HAS TWO OTHER CHILDREN. RAFSANJANI'S SECOND CHILD, YASSER, CONTROLS THE IMPORTS OF MANY MAJOR EAST ASIAN COMPANIES DOING BUSINESS IN IRAN AND IS SAID TO HAVE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS; HIS OTHER SON, MEHDI, IS DOING WELL AS THE HEAD OF A BUSINESS GROUP WHICH HAS TIES TO GERMAN, CANADIAN, AND JAPANESE FIRMS. SOURCE CLAIMS THE RAFSANJANI FAMILY OWNS MOST OF RAFSANJAN--AN IMPORTANT PISTACHIO-GROWING TOWN AND REGION--AND PRODUCES "RAFSANJAN PISTACHIOS" WHICH ACCOUNT FOR NINETY PERCENT OF ALL PISTACHIO EXPORTS FROM IRAN. HE ADDS THAT THE FAMILY ALSO CONTROLS THE PROFITABLE "FREE-TRADE ZONE" ON QESHM ISLAND IN THE PERSIAN GULF.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: SOURCE VIEWS THE WEALTH OF THE RAFSANJANI FAMILY IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT, BUT OTHER IRANIANS ACCUSE THE PRESIDENT OF CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM. THE CONTROL OVER THE RAFSANJAN PISTACHIO BUSINESS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY OTHER SOURCES, ALTHOUGH THE NINETY PERCENT FIGURE MAY BE HIGH. RAFSANJANI'S CONTROL OVER THE QESHM FREE ZONE IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE. IN ANY CASE, THE RAFSANJANI FAMILY IS ASSURED OF A LARGE AND STEADY INCOME FROM THEIR BROADENING VENTURES. END COMMENT.

AYATOLLAH TALEGHANI'S DAUGHTER GIVES INPUT

¶9. (C) IN EARLY MARCH AZAN TALEGHANI, PRESIDENT OF THE ISLAMIC WOMEN'S INSTITUTE OF IRAN, CAME THROUGH ISTANBUL ON HER WAY TO A UN CONFERENCE IN NY. MS. TALEGHANI IS THE DAUGHTER OF THE LATE AYATOLLAH MAHMOUD TALEGHANI, A PIVOTAL FIGURE IN THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION. ACCORDING TO MS. TALEGHANI THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IS GROWING. DURING THE SHAH'S TIME THERE WERE NEVER MORE THAN FOUR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT, NOR DID THE NUMBER RISE AFTER THE REVOLUTION. FOLLOWING THE 1992 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, NINE FEMALE MEMBERS WON POSITIONS IN THE MAJLES. FOUR MORE WERE ELECTED IN THE 1996 ELECTIONS, BRINGING THE TOTAL TO THIRTEEN. TALEGHANI SAYS FOUR OF THE THIRTEEN WOMEN IN THE MAJLES ARE LIBERAL/PRAGMATISTS, THREE ARE CONSERVATIVES, AND THE OTHER SIX DO NOT HAVE CLEAR AFFILIATIONS. SEVERAL FEMALE LIBERAL CANDIDATES WERE NOT CERTIFIED BY THE COUNCIL OF GUARDIANS IN THE LAST ELECTIONS OR THE NUMBER COULD HAVE BEEN HIGHER.

¶10. (C) MS. TALEGHANI SAYS THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM

WOMEN FACE IN IRAN IS THE INABILITY TO ENTER THE WORK FORCE. THE PRIMARY TASK OF HER ORGANIZATION IS TO GET WOMEN INTO WELL-PAYING JOBS. THE ORGANIZATION'S MOST SUCCESSFUL VENTURE SO FAR IS A TEXTILE COOPERATIVE, MANAGED AND STAFFED BY WOMEN, WHICH MAKES CLOTHING FOR EXPORT TO DUBAI. SUCH SUCCESS IS RARE IN IRAN, SAYS TALEGHANI, AND MOST WOMEN WHO WORK ARE TEACHERS. MORE YOUNG WOMEN THAN EVER BEFORE ARE RECEIVING SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION, BUT OUTSIDE OF TEACHING THERE ARE FEW PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN. MS. TALEGHANI WAS A TEACHER FOR MANY YEARS AND ACTUALLY HAD FAEZEH RAFSANJANI AS A STUDENT. TALEGHANI SAYS FAEZEH WAS "NOT A REMARKABLE STUDENT," BUT IS PLEASED WITH HER POLITICAL SUCCESS AND WITH THE PROGRESS THIS REPRESENTS FOR IRANIAN WOMEN.

¶11. (U) NOTE: SOURCE'S FATHER--AYATOLLAH MAHMOUD TALEGHANI--WAS A UNIVERSITY TEACHER AND LEFTIST ISLAMIC THEORIST PERSECUTED THROUGHOUT THE SHAH'S REGIME. HIS FAMILY HAD DEEP ROOTS AMONG THE BAZAARI (MERCHANT CLASS) IN TEHRAN, AND MAINTAINS EVEN NOW SOME OF ITS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE. ACCORDING TO JOHN STEMPEL'S "INSIDE THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION" TALEGHANI "...WAS IDOLIZED BY THE URBAN POOR AND BY THE YOUNG INTELLECTUALS IN BOTH MUJAHADIN AND FEDAYEEN CIRCLES FOR HIS OPPOSITION TO THE SHAH.... HE WAS THE ONLY INDIVIDUAL [AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION] WHOSE PERSONAL REPUTATION WAS IMPRESSIVE ENOUGH TO DEFY KHOMEINI." A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI AND AYATOLLAH TALEGHANI THREATENED THE REVOLUTION AND COULD HAVE RESULTED IN CIVIL WAR, BUT TALEGHANI EVENTUALLY CONCEDED TO KHOMEINI FOR THE SAKE OF UNITY. HE DIED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.

HUGGINS